

THE HOMES OF THE EVENING STAR.

By HAL P. DENTON.

During the half century that The Evening Star has been such an important factor in the growth, development and welfare of Washington and the District of Columbia it has had several homes. A primitive and modest building at 8th and D streets northwest was the first home of The Evening Star.



It was one of the busiest corners of the national capital in those days. Little room was needed in which to get out the five-column folio that greeted the people of the city every afternoon. Business office, editorial and composing rooms and the press room altogether did not take up as much

space as half a floor of the present modern home of the paper. The founder of The Evening Star and his small force of employees labored hard to make The Evening Star a success and their reward was tangible.

For several months in 1853 The Evening Star had its real home in 6th street below



The Star's Home in 1853.

Pennsylvania avenue. The press work was done by Buell & Blanchard in another building, and the forms were carried back and forth by hand. The counting room of The Evening Star during this period was in Pennsylvania avenue near 6th street. Advertisements, copy of all kinds that found its way to the business office, had to be carried by messenger to the editorial or composing rooms. This was long before pneumatic tube service was even thought of.

The management of The Evening Star seemed to appreciate the importance of being in the center of business activity of the city. In May of that year The Evening Star changed its abode to the second floor of a two-story building in D street near 12th street northwest, the present site of the Franklin fire engine house. This building was erected by Everett & Bro., and was used as a blacksmith shop and a coach factory. A writer who was contemporary with the time observed that it "was a quaint building for a newspaper office, but quite suitable for making coaches." Entrance to the ground floor of this building that was the home of The Evening Star for more than a year was by two large doors, wide

enough for a wagon or carriage to go through.

The office of The Evening Star, upstairs, was compact. Business manager, editor, reporters, compositors were all thrown together in one room. Happy family it was. Three windows in front, the sashes of which extended down to the floor, gave plenty of light. The old single-cylinder press, with a capacity of perhaps not more than a thousand impressions an hour, performed its daily mission in a shed adjoining the building in the rear, and man power was utilized in place of steam, which was not adopted until several years later.

The Evening Star continued to grow in the favor of the people of Washington, and the management, ever on the alert to keep pace with needs and demands, determined upon other and more commodious quarters for its youthful protege. Although in existence less than two years, there was no longer any question as to the success of the venture. The little home above the coach factory was inadequate for the constantly increasing business.

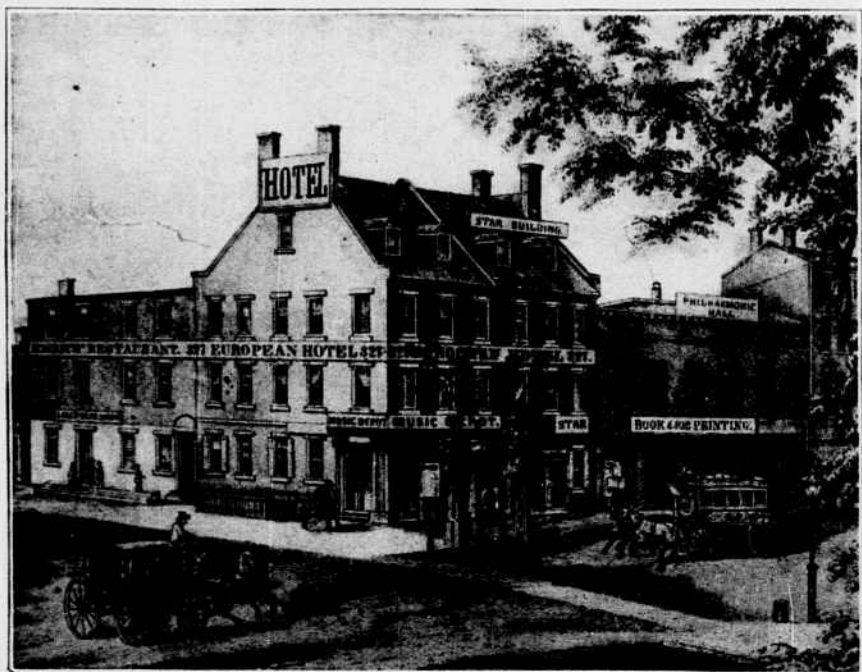
From '54 to '81.

September 30, 1854, found The Evening Star duly installed in another home, this time in a three-story-and-attic building of brick at the southwest corner of Pennsylvania avenue and 11th street, where the present massive granite structure of the United States Post Office Department now stands. The building was erected by William J. Stone, an engraver, in the late twenties. The property was known as lots 11 and 12, in square 323, of the official plats of the city, and was included in the original grant of the farm of David Burns in 1792 by the original proprietor to the commissioners to lay off the federal city.

The building was one of the largest in the city at the time it was built. Mr. Stone carried on the business of engraving, and was engaged to a considerable extent in government printing and furnishing maps in addition to his private work. This old building, which was the home of The Evening Star until 1881, was possessed of much historic interest. In 1833, when Washington was invaded by a cholera epidemic which carried off hundreds, especially from the laboring classes who were employed on the Washington city canal and in improving Pennsylvania avenue, it was used temporarily as a hospital. Few there are living today who remember that scourge, which caused terror and apprehension among the people of the young and struggling city. Many patients were treated within the walls of the building. The older employees of The Evening Star recall vividly the stories that were told of the cholera scare in the days that The Evening Star made its home there.

Stone needed only a portion of the building for his own business, and before The Evening Star moved there it had been the home of two printing offices. For some time Mrs. Richardson used the upper rooms and the rear building as a boarding house. Several senators and representatives made their headquarters there when Congress was in session.

When The Evening Star became a tenant of the building there was a music store on the corner. Next to this was an auction store, and then came the entrance to the business office or counting room of The Evening Star. Adjoining the business office on the west was a variety theater. In this old building The Evening Star made rapid



THE STAR'S HOME FROM 1854 TO 1881.



THE STAR'S NEW HOME.

strides to the front. It prospered as never before. The counting room was narrow and on one side was a long counter that extended to the rear, where were located the offices of the owners and the business manager. The press room was still further back and under the stage of the theater. The second floor of the building, over the business office and the music store and auction room, were the offices of the editors and reporters. There was an entrance from 11th street with stairways leading to the second and third floors, the latter of which was used for the composing room.

In the composing room the stands and

drug business in 1830, or a little before, and later Charles Gautier conducted a confectionery store on the corner. S. Calvert Ford took the building in the fifties and ran a drug store there for some years. Finally Mr. Hood purchased the site and erected the marble front building, which was subsequently purchased by the present owners of The Evening Star, and which was used as the home of the paper until the present magnificent modern structure supplanted it. It is interesting to note that when the ground was prepared for the present Star building the old-fashioned bake ovens of the Gautier cook shop were brought to view



THE STAR'S HOME FROM 1881 TO 1899.

cases were arranged near the windows, that the compositors might have plenty of light for their work, and habitues of that part of Pennsylvania avenue from 1854 to 1881 will recall the sight of the little army of men who were engaged daily in standing on end the "leaden messengers of thought," the impression of which they were to read that day in the columns of their favorite newspaper. The composing room was heated by an old-time cylinder coal stove that stood majestically in the center of the floor, and around it the men gathered on winter mornings to warm their fingers and steel sticks before starting in at their daily toil. In extremely cold weather a wood fire in the old fireplace on the 11th street side augmented the warmth of the room. This old building, around which were surrounded many pleasant memories of the early days of The Evening Star, was permitted to stand until the government purchased it as a site for the new Post Office Department building in 1891.

In Larger Quarters.

It was during the time that The Evening Star had its home here that the present management came into ownership of the paper. Again, because of increasing business and prosperity, was The Evening Star compelled to seek larger quarters. Pennsylvania avenue and 11th street was an ideal place for the publishing of a great daily newspaper. The management cast about for a new home. Other places were considered, but none that seemed to meet all the requirements. In 1881 the present site, at the northwest corner of Pennsylvania avenue and 11th street, just across the way from the place that the paper had had such a marvelous growth in business, was selected.

In the early part of the century there had been a few frame buildings on the site. Wallace Kirkwood had established there a

on the 11th street side, after having been forgotten by Washingtonians for two generations or more. So solid were they that they taxed the strength of the workmen in removing them. Mr. Gautier was one of the advertisers in the first issue of The Star.

The building on the northwest corner of 11th street and Pennsylvania avenue, which was demolished in 1899, needs only passing mention, as its appearance is well remembered by nearly every reader of The Evening Star. It was in this building that the paper had its greatest era of prosperity. It was four stories high and the counting room and business offices occupied the ground floor. The second floor was devoted to editorial purposes in front, and in the rear was the news and reportorial force. The library and file rooms were on the third floor, while the fourth floor was occupied by the composing room.

The Star had not been in its new home long before it was found that even more room would soon be imperatively needed. The composing room was too narrow and congested for effective work, and by the middle of the decade the necessity for expansion became so suggestive that The Star company leased the land immediately adjoining on the north on 11th street, occupied by store buildings. No move was immediately made toward occupying the ground until 1889, when the old buildings were razed and a substantial four-story brick building was erected as an annex to The Star's establishment. At first only the composing room was sent into the new quarters, this being accomplished in the latter part of 1889. When that was done the top floor of the corner building was divided between the illustrators, the book-keepers and, later, the advertising writers.

The Fire of '92.

In April, 1892, fire occurred in the boiler room and the "L" building of the main